

Tips on Antibiotics

When a child comes down with an inflamed throat, swollen lymph glands or a hacking cough, many parents want quick results from their primary care provider. But what some parents don't realize is that *viruses* cause most coughs, sore throats and virtually all colds. Antibiotics (such as amoxicillin) attack only bacterial germs. Further, the misuse of antibiotics can cause the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria-one of the major public health threats of the 21st century.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 20 percent to 50 percent of the 235 million doses of antibiotics used annually by humans are unnecessary. Here is what you can do to help ensure proper use of antibiotics and other medications:

- Don't push your primary care provider to prescribe antibiotics. The decision is best left to your doctor, based on the specific diagnosis.
- When your child is taking an antibiotic, be sure he or she takes a complete dose for the duration of the time that it is prescribed, even if your son or daughter appears to be well again. Finish all of the medicine.
- Never use antibiotics that were prescribed for an earlier infection or for another person, even if symptoms are identical. The medication could mask symptoms or interfere with important diagnostic tests.
- Always tell your primary care provider about reactions or side effects from any medications.
- When using any medications, follow labeling or your doctor's instructions exactly.

(Based on the American Academy of Pediatrics "Parent Plus - Information from your Pediatrician.")

Dr. Rita Moreck, MD, FAAP
Family Practice Clinic
MEDDAC-Japan, Sams USAHC